

Boy Bands Are Back [Again]:

In the midst of a digital music revolution and social media marketing frenzy.

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Talk to any two females — young or old — and you're sure to find they have at least one thing in common: teen heartthrobs. At one point in almost every girl's life (OK, if you don't fit the bill, then you at least knew someone who did) there have been posters, screams and day dreams of her favorite singer, many of whom were in boy bands, possessing looks to kill and enough charm to elicit thousands of marriage proposals.

Preadolescent females, known today as tweens, are the ones falling in love. The heartthrob of their lives comes along every 10 years or so, fading in and out. It was Sinatra for their grandmothers, The Beatles for their moms and Backstreet Boys or 'N Sync for their older sisters. The Jonas Brothers, Big Time Rush and Allstar Weekend dot the idol radar today, alongside the one and only Justin Bieber. Undoubtedly, there are more on the horizon.

You can never underestimate the lung capacity of a 12-year-old girl or her role in the economy for that matter. Even with their natural insecurities, tweens across the world have more power than just controlling the volume on the CD player. For perspective, the book publishing industry makes \$23.9 billion annually, but, with the help of persuadable, dreamy eyed girls and their parents' wallets, a \$42 billion dollar tween music industry has been created.

Leesa Coble, editor in chief of the tween magazines Tiger Beat and BOP, has been working with the 9 to 14-year-old demographic for 14 years and says that market has an effective role in the economy.

“The tween market has a giant, giant impact,” she said. “We’re looking at a base of about 21 million tweens, and they spend a little bit over \$2,000 a year. You’re not going to pass anything over on them, they have to accept you, like you, and be into you [regarding pop stars]. They are what is responsible for the giant success of these acts.”

“It’s incredibly important,” said Lillian Matulic, a publicist for Hollywood Records, home to pop stars such as Miley Cyrus, Selena Gomez and the Jonas Brothers. “They are incredibly devoted and can create viral sensations instantaneously.”

The idea of not one, but three, four or five young men who can sing, dance and are easy to look at, is very marketable and has proven so over the decades with 90s bands New Kids on the Block, Backstreet Boys and ‘N Sync. Collectively they sold over 242 million albums worldwide and have broken all sorts of industry records for ticket and album sales.

As they put it in their 1998 hit song, “Backstreet’s back, alright.” The Backstreet *Boys* are now five *men* headed towards middle age, ranging from 31 to 39 years old. They’re reviving their careers with a 2011 international summer tour alongside their predecessors, New Kids on the Block (ages 38 to 42). This means that in cities from New York to Vancouver, arenas will be filled with women from 22 to 32, screaming like the girls they used to be.

The two pop sensations must have been curious to see if their fans have grown up yet. Evidently not because the tour’s promoter, Live Nation, said the demand for tickets was

so “overwhelming” that 19 more shows were added to the boy band bonanza for a total of 52 tour dates across the U.S. and Canada. The combined supergroup is also releasing an album in May that will consist of fan-picked songs of the past and a few new ones.

“It really helps to wait about 10 years so that you’ve been away long enough for people to really enjoy the fact that you’re back,” Coble said. “I recently went to the Oprah taping where she did sort of a *Tiger Beat* type special where the Backstreet Boys came back to surprise the fans. The fans are still devoted, and it seems like they’ll be devoted forever.”

Matulic agrees that the revival tour was a smart marketing decision because “there is a great deal of nostalgia for these groups.”

The nostalgia factor also hits 57-year-olds. The boys of the Jackson Five had enough star power to even make *the* Oprah Winfrey swoon. Yes, the billionaire who’s achieved superstardom herself, still felt weak in the knees when her childhood love, Jackie Jackson, appeared on her Teen Heartthrob special in October. And if it’s on “The Oprah Show,” well then, the world knows how important the issue it is, right?

The nostalgia isn’t necessarily the music, it’s what you were doing when you heard the music. So why is there always a market for boy bands?

“There are always tween girls looking for boys to have crushes on and for music that they relate to,” Matulic said. “Boy bands deliver on both counts.”

Former 'N Sync member, Joey Fatone, puts it simply: "Right here," he said, shaking his head and pointing to his 10-year-old daughter beside him. "That's the big [reason], there it is, right there for you. Always younger kids, new generations every year."

Don't hold your breath girls. Fatone said 'N Sync won't be reuniting anytime soon.

Dr. Mitch Prinstein, director of clinical psychology at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, specializes in adolescent psychology and says that the boy band icon can serve many important psychological functions for the tween girl because the male heartthrobs are objects of affection, but not sexually threatening.

"She may develop romantic feelings directed toward him, but because he has the image of purity and gentleness, she does not need to imagine the pressure of assertive sexual advances she is not ready for," Prinstein said.

"He sings about unconditional love and acceptance, devotion and romance. To the insecure tween girl who frets about her appearance, this is music to her ears," Prinstein added. "And as one of the most popular people on the planet, his acceptance translates to the highest sense of her own self worth."

Nowadays Bieber may be the name everybody recognizes — or gets nauseous over — but the boy bands continue to exist, creating a cult following of their own, and raking in the money.

There's a basic recipe in creating a boy band. Take three to five good-looking charmers in their early 20s or younger, hand them microphones, some tight jeans and throw in some dance lessons. Do this and there's likely to be hundreds of shrieking, crying and sometimes fainting girls lined up around the block.

It seems simple, but it's not. Besides the physical appeal of these bands, most do possess the musical talent and dedication required to tackle what's typically an arduous schedule. They're also subtly different on a personal level. The Jonas Brothers are three reserved siblings, Allstar Weekend is a group of extremely driven high school friends, and Big Time Rush consists of four comic actors, all bursting with charisma.

The Jonas Brothers have been on the scene for a few years now, but Joe, 21, Nick, 18, and Kevin, 23, got their start in their home state of New Jersey after Nick joined the bright lights on Broadway in New York City. By the time he was 10, Nick finished working with shows such as "A Christmas Carol" and "Beauty and the Beast." He initially caught the attention of record label executives as a solo artist, but when the three brothers with curly dark hair started writing songs together, they became marketable as a group.

The brothers signed to Hollywood Records at the end of 2006, and Disney, the parent company of the label, has created a multimillion dollar franchise with the group. In terms of revenue, the Walt Disney Company is the biggest media and entertainment conglomerate in the world. It owns and operates a motion picture group, broadcast and

cable networks (ABC, Disney Channel, ESPN, ABC Family), radio stations, theme parks, a cruise line, and has divisions in publishing, merchandising and theater.

Once they became part of the Disney family, the Jonas Brothers were able to hit the high notes in 2008 when they starred in the company's wildly successful TV movie "Camp Rock" (and later "Camp Rock 2: The Final Jam" in 2010). The boys even landed their own half hour sitcom, "Jonas L.A.," for two seasons on the Disney Channel.

"We're fortunate to have a multi-platform company to market artists," Matulic said.

"Disney Channel is very supportive with video airplay, guest spots and television series.

Radio Disney is an integral part of launching many of our records."

Since their characters in the movie and show were singers, it didn't require Oscar winning performances on the brothers behalf to keep an audience.

"I think it's a hyperreality of us sometimes," Kevin said. "You know there are situations of course that are acting and different things, but we definitely pull from situations we've been in in the past, and our characters, we could relate with them, so it works out that way. But other than that, we try to do our best to sell the character I guess."

No need to sell a character, because selling themselves has worked just fine. They released their first feature film, "Jonas Brothers: The 3-D Concert Experience" two years ago, which grossed over \$20 million. Forbes.com reports on Hollywood's top earning "Moguls in the Making" under age 35, and last year, the Jonas Brothers ranked number

seven with estimated earnings of \$35.5 million. That year also laid them comfortably in the 40th spot on Forbes' Celebrity 100 list. Oprah was number one.

The Grammy nominated trio has had tours gross \$95 million, \$30 million of which came from overseas. The majority of their income stems from concert sales rather than actual album sales because tickets are higher priced items. Currently, ticket prices to see the group perform live can range anywhere from \$42 to \$685 on sites such as StubHub.com. The band draws on average, 14,000 fans per night, which means sold out crowds...in minutes.

Dan Charnas, author of "The Big Payback: The History of the Business of Hip-Hop," said that the overall balance of money flow in the industry has changed since the late 1990s. "The industry was traditionally based on two pillars: income from sound recordings and income from touring," he said. "The former has all but collapsed, leaving touring and ancillary income--licensing fees, merchandising, branding--as the new albeit shaky foundations of the modern music biz."

There's plenty of branding, merchandise and touring for the famous brothers. They finished a tour through South America in the fall and now Joe will be releasing a solo album this spring as his younger brother did last year. Nick is at that college age, but he's opted for writing songs for other artists and even took time to star in the London production of "Les Miserables."

“Last year I went and visited some colleges,” Nick said. “The timing I don’t think is right for me to be able to go and do that now. It’s something that I think I might like to do if it was right, but I think I’m learning a lot from life experience and from what I’m doing now, so it might be enough, but we’ll see where it takes me.”

Kevin recently got married and is enjoying life. His wife, Danielle, travels on tour with the them. This is how the Jonas’ describe their life on the road:

“I try to be pretty neat,” Joe said. “My room is pretty spotless even on tour. Really anything, I try to keep it clean.”

“I can be pretty messy,” Kevin added. “Unintentionally, but I can be.”

“Yeah, but you have somebody [Danielle] to help you out,” Joe said.

“No, she doesn’t clean up after me, she just helps me out in organizing my crazy...”

Joe interjected with a smile, “It’s funny because [the other day] you were talking about your dog or something, and you were like ‘Don’t let her eat that because if she throws up, then I’m going to have to clean up after her.’ And then Danielle goes, ‘*You* have to clean up after her?’ It was pretty funny.”

The JoBros, the band's popular nickname, have already developed their own company, The Jonas Group, and they also established a partnership with AOL, which includes their teen web portal, Cambio. Branching out into other ventures such as designing clothes, acting, and merchandising is what's continually adding up profits and building deeper pockets for them. If you walk into a store like Target, you'll find over 300 "Camp Rock" items for sale with Jonas faces all over it. From bedspreads and posters, to jewelry, video games, books and back packs, the young entrepreneurs are hard to miss. The merchandising has even stretched to a clothing line sold in Walmart, J.C. Penney, Sears and Kmart, and it's only designed for young girls.

The brothers may not have danced on stage like the bands of the 90s, but they've done just about everything else, which includes writing songs and playing instruments. Writing their own music literally pays off, too. The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) is a performing rights group that licenses music for public performance. The company pays its members (certain song writers and publishers) money every time music is played on the radio, TV, in concerts, and on the internet. Profits are made even when a 90 second preview is played on iTunes.

Senior Vice President of ASCAP's Member Management, Seth Saltzman, explains how the business works. "We collect license fees from everybody that uses music," he said. "From restaurants, night clubs, shopping malls, television, radio, satellite radio, Pandora, Youtube and so on. They all pay us."

The licensing fees that these outlets pay depends on individual revenues. For instance, a fee will be smaller at a radio station in Idaho than at a big station in New York City, like Z100. This, in turn, varies the monetary value of a song. A performance on an Idaho station may be worth, say, \$1.97, but at Z100, the same song could earn \$50 to \$100. “We have stations that pay us \$300 to \$500 a year, and we have stations that pay us a million dollars a year. So there’s a phrase, follow the dollar. Your music is valued based on where it’s played, where it’s performed.”

ASCAP then pays the writers and record companies (in essence, the artist). “The writer and publisher make equal money,” Saltzman said. “In our case at ASCAP, if we pay the writer a dollar, we pay the publisher a dollar. There may be four writers and they’ll each get 25 cents. There may be one publisher and the publisher gets a dollar, or they each have their own publishing company so they’ll get 25 cents as a writer and 25 cents as a publisher.”

Artists can even make a good chunk of money from airline performances because a variety of songs are played on a Continental, United and Delta radio channels. Generally speaking, Saltzman added, “You could be talking into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, very quickly for a radio hit. And, you could absolutely be talking into the millions of dollars a year for a radio hit while it’s riding the top of the charts because usually with a radio hit, not only is it a radio hit, it’s probably getting a lot of TV play.”

So do bands who write their own songs, like the JoBros, have an everlasting shelf life? Even as an experienced publicist, Matulic says longevity is hard to predict.

“It really varies,” she said. “They’re [Backstreet Boys] doing a reunion tour, and there’s a huge nostalgia factor. They never wrote songs or played instruments, but if you do write your own songs and play instruments, I think you have more options. You can write songs for other artists, it makes you more versatile, and I think more valuable.”

But, that’s not a requirement of all boy bands. Actually, it’s a pretty unique trait. Similar to the bands of the 90s, the newest band, Big Time Rush, sings manufactured pop melodies and creates a deaf-inducing sea of screeching tweens with their fine tuned choreography.

This other way to recruit a boy band is through a TV show. Much like the late sixties band The Monkees, Big Time Rush started out as just goofy characters on their self-titled show on Nickelodeon about four friends in a band trying to make it in Los Angeles.

Carlos Pena, 21, James Maslow, 20, Kendall Schmidt, 20, and Logan Henderson, 21, were four of 1500 relatively unknown actor-singers who auditioned for the Nickelodeon comedy in 2007. Before their big break came along, Pena was studying music at the Boston Conservatory, Schmidt was struggling to make music with his friend in Burbank, Calif., and Maslow and Henderson were booking small roles in the TV circuit.

Once filming of “Big Time Rush” started in 2009, the boys meshed into the cookie cutter pop package that creators were hoping for. The show officially premiered to 8.6 million viewers in January of 2010 (Nickelodeon’s highest-rated live-action series debut), and it was a given for the quartet to take a step off the set and onto the stage. Nickelodeon

partnered with Columbia Records/Epic Label Group to create a dynamic marketing tool that promotes both a show and music (one of three Nick shows that was established that way).

They released their first album, “BTR” (which includes songs from the show), when the second season began in October, and it debuted at number three on Billboard’s Top 200 chart. The album became one of the highest charting debut albums in the U.S. in 2010, selling over 1.7 million combined digital tracks to date.

It’s a symbiotic relationship because the TV show promotes the band, and the album promotes the show. The exposure to hundreds of millions of tween homes across the world provides almost instantaneous popularity. Nickelodeon is owned by MTV Networks and has been the number one cable network for 16 years. A press release points out that its U.S. network is seen in more than 100 million homes across the country, and the company also includes international programming, consumer products, online, books and feature films.

In some cases, with media conglomerates like Disney and Nickelodeon, the money made off of these singers is cycled around. “Nickelodeon pays us [ASCAP] a license fee to broadcast music,” Saltzman said. “They don’t happen to own all of the music, because Nickelodeon could have an artist on one of their shows where they don’t own the music, but in the case where they do own the publishing, we pay the royalty back to Nickelodeon. So they say, ‘We pay ASCAP \$10, and we get \$9 back in royalties.’ That’s the American way.”

It's been a little over 12 months since the West Coast-based band catapulted onto the tween scene. They established their densely populated New York fan base this past summer taking over Times Square and Herald Square for special concerts.

In August, Schmidt talked about how “the coolest thing we did [this past summer] was playing the concert in Times Square [for a scene in their show]. ‘Big Time Concert’ is really important to us because we wanted to put a lot of effort into our last episode [of the first season]. It’s going to be the biggest episode we’ve ever had.”

Little did they know that a few months later they’d be asked to perform in the Macy’s Thanksgiving Day Parade, go on to make music with the likes of famous rapper, Snoop Dog, have guest stars like Russel Brand, and tour the world to promote album sales and radio play.

During their promotional tour, the members of Big Time Rush explained the hectic lifestyle they live as singers and actors:

“I mean for us it’s even more insane than the normal tour,” Maslow said. “We’re going from a week of filming then a week on the road to a week of filming, and then back to a week on the road. We’re flying, and we’re on a tour bus some stops. It feels like months.”

Schmidt added, “In the last three weeks we’ve been on more than 12 airplanes.”

“And twelve hours of sleep throughout the whole week,” Henderson blurted out.

Despite the time commitments required for triple threat (singing, dancing, acting) pop stars, they said their experience so far has “been a blessing.”

“We’ve been in, I think, 15 states [in the past few weeks], which is pretty crazy,” Pena said. “We’ve met so many people.”

Maslow added, “We must have signed 10,000 CDs at this point, shook 30,000 hands. I mean it’s just insane. We played at the Mall of America and 9,000 fans showed up. It was just insane, that type of energy being on stage. I can’t even explain it.”

Their big time roll continues this spring when they perform at their first awards show, the (tween) coveted Kids’ Choice Awards. They’re nominated for Favorite TV Show and Favorite Music Group. They continue to film more episodes and plan to go on an official concert tour this summer.

“Big Time Rush is not just another pretty boy band,” said 15-year-old fan Megan Lintz, who traveled to New York from Maryland in September to see them in concert. “They are genuine guys who really care about their music, TV show, and most importantly, their

fans. They are Big Time Rush, and they are here to stay. They make me feel like everything will be okay, even when I'm at my lowest.”

Lintz met Carlos, James, Kendall and Logan on her trip to the city. While scouting for them in Times Square prior to the concert, she and her friend noticed four black SUVs parked in front of a nearby hotel and ran over when she caught a glimpse of Kendall putting his guitar in the trunk of the car.

“I was literally crying,” Lintz said. “No one else was around, it was just them and us. Logan and Carlos were already in the car, but James and Kendall weren't, so I go up to Kendall, and I'm like ‘Can I get a pic? I love you!’ He's like ‘Thank you, and yeah sure, but we kinda got to go soon!’ So I take a pic, James gets in the car, and we talk to them for a little bit, but then when they had to go, I saw Logan through the window, and he waved and blew us kisses. It was by far the best day of my life. I was literally shaking afterwards.”

Unlike most boy bands, Big Time Rush has a more diverse fan base. There are both male and female fans, and also, really young and a little bit older kids. This is most likely due to the TV show's ability to reach different homes. Eileen Aylwin, a 43-year-old mother of four, said that Big Time Rush has a positive influence in her household. Her 13-year-old daughter, two 8-year-old boys, and even her one-year-old, like Big Time Rush.

“My one-year-old, God, she’ll come bolting into the room if she hears the theme music on TV, and she’ll dance to it,” Aylwin said. “A one-year-old will not sit in front of a TV for too long, but when “Big Time Rush” is on, she’ll sit and watch it. It’s so funny. The show is good because there’s no dirty language, it’s a comedy, and the music isn’t that heavy metal stuff that some kids are into.”

There are some older fans, too. “The Jonas Brothers are usually in the spotlight, and I think the time has come to see Big Time Rush have all the glory,” said 20-year-old Rabia Kahn from Toronto. “My dad has no clue about BTR, all he knows is that I talk about James Maslow a lot and that I want to marry him. He probably thinks I’m weird, but oh well, what can I do?”

So could Big Time Rush be the next ‘N Sync? Other pop stars think so. Victoria Justice, who also doubles as an actress and singer on Nickelodeon with her own show, “Victorious,” knows that “all the girls love [Big Time Rush], and they’re all really talented, so they could totally be that successful.” This 18-year-old may not live an ordinary teen life, but she still thinks like one. Justice grew up loving boy bands, specifically ‘N Sync, and she still wears their necklace “proudly” to this day.

“Girls love boys,” Justice said. “The more of them the better, I think. It’s just how most teenage girls, the way we think. Girls love boy bands because when they’re [band

members] singing ballads or any love songs like that, girls love to feel like they're singing it to them.”

Of course there's a specific strategy in promoting bands like 'N Sync, BTR and the Jonas Brothers, and it all has to do with maximizing profits.

“There is an art to timing album releases,” Matulic said. “Holiday times are very lucrative, which is why many record companies save their big releases for the third quarter when retail traffic is high. Summer is also popular as it's a big time for touring, and having a new release to promote live makes sense. TV performances are timed based on new single or CD releases.”

Big Time Rush released two songs for Christmas, and their self-titled album can be purchased for \$7.99 at Best Buy compared to the Jonas Brothers' debut album for \$17.99. The prices of albums are decided by the sales team and distributor of the specific record label. New artists, like Big Time Rush, are usually priced lower to entice new fans.

“Well, I've spent a lot of money to say the least,” Lintz said. “Some of the money is my parents', but a good amount is my own. I've bought five of BTR's albums and two of their \$100 VIP tickets to see them in Pennsylvania-- I'm traveling there for the concert in September. I got dozens of posters, clothing items, iTunes downloads for their music videos, and their season one and two TV shows.”

Not all bands have their own television shows though, so they have a few extra steps to take before making it big. One group still on the rise is Allstar Weekend. Much like the Jonas Brothers, these band members from San Diego write their own songs, play their own instruments and weren't manufactured by a casting director.

Meet the pop-rock, boys next door. With a laid back, yet driven attitude, these four young men can always be found wearing skinny jeans, Converse sneakers and strumming their own guitars. Since high school, Michael Martinez, 21, lead singer Zach Porter, 21, bassist Cameron Quiseng, 20, and lead guitarist Nathan Darmody, 19, have been working hard making their own music, before any signs of fame.

"We weren't put together," Porter said. "We've been doing this for four years. We've been playing, you know, dingy bars, we've done all of that. We were friends, we were writing music before this, and we write all of our music now, too."

"We practiced in the garage, and we drove our own van for multiple tours before we got signed," added Quiseng. "So we really worked from the ground up and then eventually ended up getting signed. Now we're here, you know. We put in the leg work."

They punched their own ticket by never giving up. Allstar Weekend had the audacity to follow the Jonas Brothers around on their 2009 summer tour where the struggling singers would do acoustic sets outside the venue where the fans were waiting in line. They were passing out flyers at the premiere of "Jonas Brothers: The 3D Concert Experience" when they were noticed by a rep at Disney. This led to a contest with Radio Disney's Next Big

Thing, where they had to showcase their musical talents to kid listeners and wait for a vote to be cast. They didn't win first prize, but in 2010, they landed a record deal with Hollywood Records.

“We don't sign lots of acts or release tons of records each year,” Matulic said. “We really pick acts we can focus on and give them the greatest chance of success.”

Now that Allstar Weekend is in the Disney family, they've appeared in guest spots on some of the channel's most popular shows, and they get airplay on its radio station. They're appreciative of the exposure from Disney and credit the company with the success they've been able to achieve, but at the same time, they're not writing the record for a TV series.

“This is not like the soundtrack to our ‘Big Time Rush’ or our ‘Jonas L.A.’ TV show,” Porter said. “This is just our album that we wrote, and if they want to play it, they can play it, and if there's something they don't feel like playing, they won't play it. So it's ours, it's just the best of both worlds.”

The platform Disney has provided undoubtedly helps the band expand its fan base, but it's the internet that has had a huge affect on Allstar Weekend's evolution. Now, fans not only can purchase merchandise and concert tickets for their favorite bands online, but social media can personally connect them to the band members.

Quiseng said a poll revealed that a majority of their fans came from two main markets, the Disney Channel and Facebook. In the beginning of the 2010, the band had 30,000 fans on Facebook. In November, the number catapulted to 670,000, and as of March 2011, 776,000 fans liked their page. “Online networking is huge for us,” he said. “Facebook is blowing up, so we update it every hour.”

Unlike the days of Beatlemania, fans in the 21st century can follow their favorite singers on Twitter and ask them questions directly via tweet. The online video phenomenon, Youtube, allows the fans to actually see the band members on camera instead of just reading what they’re saying.

“They get to see your personality and see who you are,” Quiseng said. “They get to connect to you on a personal level. You know, they can relate to you. They can say, ‘Oh man I totally understand how he feels.’”

It’s much easier for fans to have access to musicians these days, whereas boy bands of the past had to rely on less accessible mediums.

“I remember the specials that they used to run on ‘N Sync and the Backstreet Boys about their lives,” Porter said. “On TV that would be a big deal back in the day, but if that came out now, who cares? I can go see it on Youtube anytime I want. It’s just much easier to get that kind of access. It’s almost expected now.”

Youtube has also opened the door for other aspiring singers to be discovered, like phenom Justin Bieber. The once popular Myspace generated the first Jonas Brothers fans.

“When they first came into the offices [*Tiger Beat*] the Jonas Brothers hadn’t had their record out yet,” Coble said. “Yet they had a fanbase of like 30 or 35,000 people--at the time it was Myspace--before they even had a record out. So they did a lot of self promoting.”

“There are so many talented people on this planet,” Quiseng said. “If they sing someone else’s song, make a video out of it, and throw it on Youtube, if it’s great, someone will see it and at this point will get millions of hits. Next thing you know they’re signed to some record label and making their own music. It’s insane.”

In just a decade, ‘N Sync’s Fatone has witnessed a new wave of digitally advantaged boy bands gain popularity.

“I think that’s what’s exciting about it because there was no Twitter, there was no Facebook, there was no Myspace,” Fatone said. “It’s a thing that people have had to go to [social media] because you didn’t have a place to say anything back then.”

The internet has revolutionized communication and has created a level of intimacy between bands and their fans that has never been reached before. In past generations,

musicians didn't have the online platform to reach millions of people around the world.

Legendary rock group, The Beatles, were able to cross over to the U.S. in 1964 with their first number-one hit, "I Want to Hold Your Hand," but fans at the time didn't have the instant access to know the British band members personally.

In a \$40 billion a year industry, all aspects of music have now gone digital, and there has been debate of whether the invention of iTunes has helped or hurt record sales for artists. More and more consumers buy their music online in singles format as opposed to spending more money on whole albums in stores. According to Nielsen SoundScan, in 2000, the music industry reached its best in sales (with roughly 785 million albums), but over the next eight years, sales dropped by 45 percent, forcing hundreds of record stores across the country to shut down. People still purchase CDs in stores like Best Buy and online at Amazon.com, but overall, the Billboard charts have been affected.

"What used to be a hot record, needed to sell 400,000 copies in a week," Satalzman said.

"But now, 50,000 copies will make you a number one album. The bar has been so lowered for what makes you a number one record or number one song these days."

The money that record companies lost due to the decline in physical album sales has yet to be replaced by online sales, but iTunes is helping them make up for some lost profits through the billions of songs that are sold on the site each year.

“iTunes skyrocketed single sales,” Matulic said. “And it continues to be a great marketing tool to promote our music.”

Three time Grammy award-winning musician Rob Thomas, of the 90s rock band Match Box Twenty, said the internet has had a positive influence on the business.

“I think iTunes in a way has kind of redefined the way music is presented,” said the 39-year-old, whose 1995 single “3 A.M.” put him on the map. “It has created the singles culture, and at the same time, it has made music more accessible in a lot of ways.”

He added, “All you hear over and over is about how the music business is doing as a whole. It has antiquated the idea that you’re supposed to give and receive music, but the music itself is probably never going to thrive more than it is now.”

Even The Beatles, have digital tracks on iTunes.

Besides nabbing the third spot in the Billboard charts, the Big Time Rush album also debuted at number one on iTunes. Back in 2008, the Jonas Brothers set a record on iTunes for reaching 100,000 downloads on three consecutive singles.

“When we were starting out as a local band, it was bumper stickers and cassettes,” Thomas said. “That was how you got things across.”

Of course there's more than just the three or four band members that are responsible for a group's multi-platform success. The individuals behind the scenes are often the most important players manipulating the strategy in the tween game of musical chess.

"There's an endless list of people who contribute to an artist's life," Matulic said. "The manager oversees everything from touring to daily schedules, the publicist gets the magazines and television shows booked, producers make a big difference in finding and recording hit songs. Lawyers are also key in negotiating the right deals."

The marketing people set up endorsement deals, the promotional team gets the songs played on the radio and puts the tours together, and photographers and video directors create all the visual elements.

Charnas said that the number of people who work for a band can be anywhere "from zero support staff for new acts to dozens for superstar acts, to hundreds for package tours and festivals." Those people behind the scenes may make the tour work for the band, but they're also costing the artists money.

"The band pays for everything," Charnas said. "They can get tour support from the label, probably harder nowadays in the internet age, because labels are now asking new artists for a cut of performance fees. Or they can get underwritten by a corporate sponsor."

The clean image that boy bands portray is also part of the marketing campaign. Big Time Rush has four personas to uphold — suspiciously similar in real life to their characters on the show. The analogous personalities make it easier for tween consumers to identify with the group. Schmidt always wears plaid shirts and often speaks as a leader. Pena is the colorful jokester, Henderson is the clever one, and Maslow is often found looking in the mirror. The best friend thing also seems to translate to real life since they spend so much time working together.

“Outside of that, like in New York with some free time, we go out to dinners together and hang out,” Maslow said. “It’s one of these things where we’re the only ones who can really relate to each other about what’s going on. It’s so strange how our lives have changed, and these boys are the only ones who really get it, so it’s a bonding experience that I can’t even explain really.”

Besides the list of managers, publicists, producers and promoters behind the bands, family remains a key factor in keeping them on the right track and grounded in what can be an overwhelming industry.

Carlos Pena Sr., father of BTR’s Carlos, said there’s nothing too difficult about his son being on TV. “We raised Carlos to believe in his dreams, and of course we supported him,” Pena said.

He added, “We still do. It’s nice to see how much Carlos enjoys what he does. He has lots of respect for the fans and his teammates. He does really appreciate the people backstage that make the show happen, and I know how hard that is because I worked on TV when I was a kid.”

Family is important to the Jonas’ as well. “Whether it’s on stage or it’s just hanging out, we know each other really well by now,” Joe said about his brothers. “We’re able to just kind of read each other’s minds. If we’re on stage, say like for instance, me, if I was forgetting a lyric or something, Nick can look over at me, and he can tell me the words by not telling me the words on stage, and it helps me.”

There’s also a fourth Jonas, 10-year-old Frankie, who joined his siblings in the sequel to “Camp Rock” in 2010. Older brother Joe likes to remind him and ask if jumping into entertainment is what he really wants.

“A lot of times people can just rush into something like this, especially if their family’s involved in it,” the lead singer said. “So we really want to make sure that he really wants to do this before he makes a career choice.”

Anyone can choose a career in entertainment, but not everyone will actually make it.

There are still quite a few boy bands out there struggling to get noticed. Keith Lazorchak manages a handful of pop-rock bands, the most recognized: All Time Low. One of his up-

and-coming acts is a young band (ages 15 to 17) called Before You Exit. Lazorchak is “definitely marketing them to the tween demographic” because “they fit perfectly.” He said, “They’re very accessible, personable kids that that demographic seems to relate really well to. I think they fill a void in that market where so much of the music is dance-pop.”

In this new era where the majority of pop stars are promoted or created by powerful entities like Disney and Nickelodeon, it’s not as easy for an outsider to reach the same demographic and take off so quickly. “It’s been difficult,” Lazorchak said. “But with the internet and the low cost of high quality home recording equipment, it’s probably easier than it would’ve been a few years ago. We’ve been very lucky that bands like All Time Low and Every Avenue have been very supportive of [Before You Exit] and helped spread the word.”

Most singers devote their entire lives to fulfilling their dreams of becoming recording artists. Regardless of work ethic, some don’t quite get there, and even the popular ones naturally end up fading out. Half of the deciding factor is in the hands of 12-year-old girls across the world. These tweens are anything but underestimated, Saltzman said, because management is “milking these bands, putting them on the publicity steamroller, trying to maximize every dollar and push them for another record, another record, another record.

“One day, one of the band members is going to wake up, and then the second one is going to wake up and say, ‘You know what? This isn’t what I want to do the rest of my life.’ Or they grow mustaches, and they get a little too old looking, and the man at the record company says ‘Uh, too old, next. On to the next.’ ”

POST SCRIPT

I discovered my story by the recommendation of my adviser, Richard Wald. In one of our first meetings, my fellow advisees and I pitched a few ideas to Professor Wald, and he bluntly told us if “it’s boring” or if “it can work.” My initial idea was something to do with cancer research, which he said could work, but he had a better idea. See, before our meeting began, Professor Wald was just getting to know me for the first time and asked what I did for fun on the weekends, how I liked school, etcetera. I told him that I didn’t have much free time, but in the few extra minutes I had to spare when I wasn’t sleeping or doing classwork, I freelanced for magazines--teeny bopper ones at that (*Tiger Beat* and *BOP*). I told him how just a few weeks prior, I was sitting down with the Jonas Brothers, covered movie premieres on the red carpet, and traveled the city on tour buses with a few other pop stars. He thought that was hilarious, so after I pitched my idea on cancer, he sat back in his chair and said, “That was a good idea, but can I tell you what I honestly think? You need to do a story on boy bands....” I almost choked when I heard those words come out of a professor’s mouth at Columbia University. I laughed because I thought it was a joke (Professor Wald is a funny guy), but it wasn’t. He said that I should take advantage of the exclusive access that I had with the magazines, so I jumped at the opportunity. With Professor Wald’s prestigious background, if he suggested something, I was going to listen. So I went home that night and thought about what I could do with this topic for a master’s project. The next week, I came in with 100 different ideas — I know so much about tween culture that it was easy for me to brainstorm. From that point on, I was excited because this was a much happier subject area to cover over a seven

month period than cancer. The focus of my piece developed over the next few weeks, and I realized that the business aspects of tween culture was fascinating. I grew up idolizing boy bands and always wondered how these young pop stars made so much money, so I started answering my own questions as part of the backbone of my project. I figured that if I had a general curiosity in certain areas of the music business, then so would other people.

I originally pitched my project as a hybrid. It took me until January to realize that producing a well developed video piece — that I was proud of and would put my name on — is very difficult with all the other school work (especially as a broadcast student because we had double the work in the first semester!). Another factor in my project falling back to print is getting access to the bands. I was going to focus on one band, Big Time Rush, for the video portion and trace their rise to the top from August to March. I interviewed them numerous times during that period and had b-roll of them performing and on a tour bus, but it was not shot well. I shot a lot of it before we learned how to use the cameras in RW1, so my shooting skills at that point were not as good as they are now. I tried to re-shoot interviews with BTR, but they didn't come to New York City for three months. I talked to publicists back in October to see if it would even be possible to do a master's thesis on the band, and they agreed. Well, nothing worked out as planned. I was going to fly out to Los Angeles in January to the set of BTR's show, but the media access was canceled at the last minute. They went on tour in Europe for the next few weeks and then back to California. I was panicked in January because I thought I *had* to submit a

hybrid since it was approved in the pitch process, but evidently not. I admit that I'm a little disappointed that I was not able to put together a video (again, I still could have, but the quality would not have been good enough for an eight minute piece). I'd rather turn in a really great print piece than a mediocre video and shorter article. I interviewed *so* many people for this project, which worked best for print anyway. It was very difficult to reach some of the sources, so it took a lot of persistence on my behalf. It took some people months to get back to me and others only hours. After my second draft, I felt very confident and knew that my piece came together the way I wanted. I am pleased with all of the sources that did help me, and I'm pleased with myself for never giving up the fight! I worked really hard on this master's project, but I wouldn't have been able to do it without Professor Wald. I will always be thankful for his guidance and comedic relief to ease my stress during the process.

****For privacy and confidentiality reasons, I am leaving out my source/contact list.****